THE METHODS OF CHARACTERIZATION IN THE NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

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Page

I[illegible]N..... 4

[illegible]N IDEA OF CHARACTERIZATI[illegible]..... 5

[illegible] SOURCE OF [illegible]T'S CH[illegible]..... 23

G[illegible]GE [illegible]LIOT'S ATTITUDE TO[illegible] [illegible]S.. 39

THE DIRECT CHARACTERIZATI[illegible] OF G[illegible]GE [illegible]LIOT.... 48

TH[illegible] INDI[illegible]CT CHARACTERIZATI[illegible]N OF G[illegible]GE [illegible]LIOT.. 61

G[illegible]RGE [illegible]LIOT'S TREATMENT OF CHANGING C[illegible]. 70

C[illegible]CLUSIONS..... 78

THE METHODS OF CHARACTERIZATION IN THE NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I shall confine my study of the methods of characterization of George Eliot to four novels: Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, Romola, and Middlemarch. It shall be my purpose, first, to set up an ideal of characterization by showing the way that well-recognized masters of the novel have used the commonly accepted methods of characterization. Secondly, I shall make a study of the methods of characterization of George Eliot and discover to what extent she uses these commonly accepted methods or if she uses any new ones.

AN IDEAL OF CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization is a highly complex art and as such there are no rules of exact procedure. Certain practices are usually followed, certain methods have been found to produce particular effects. But everyone is at liberty to experiment and innovation is constant. The follower of a formula has no chance for true success in characterization, however, unless he is guided by the clear light of genius; for character delineation, the last essential of the novel to be developed, is by far the most difficult, and taxes the powers of the novelist to a much greater degree than do the other matters of setting and plot. Truly, it is human nature that makes us all kin, and it is in character, and in character above all else, that the novelist is able to touch the springs of life.

Character creation is a comparatively new motive in fiction writing, scarcely two centuries old. Yet it has easily monopolized the reader's attention and interest to the extent that mere story telling, without the development of convincing characters, is scarcely ever sought in the field of the novel. Surely it was an advance in drama when the protagonists were converted from the conventional puppets - hero, heroine, and villain - who were so entirely at

the mercy of the exigencies of the all-important plot, into living, recognizable human beings, who control and influence the plot by their own inevitable natures. The new relation of the novelist to his character is aptly described by Trollope in this quotation:[1]

> The novelist has other aims than the elucidation of his plot. He desires to make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters that the creatures of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living human creatures. This he can never do unless he knows those fictitious personages himself, and he can never know them unless he can live with them in the full reality of established intimacy..... He must learn to hate them and to love them. He must argue with them, quarrel with them, forgive them, and even submit to them. They must be with him as he lies down to sleep, as he wakes from his dreams. He must know of them whether they be cold-blooded or passionate, whether true or false, and how far true and how far false. The depth and the breadth and the narrowness and the shallowness of each should be clear to him.

No thought in this quotation seems more true than that the novelist must sometimes submit to his characters, letting them take the story into their hands. Masters of the art of novel writing, such as Turgeniev, Balzac, and Flaubert, are unanimous in their method of creating character first, and then letting the story grow out of what they imagine these characters would do. As soon as the characters became alive to them, they wrought out the plot for themselves, as we

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1. Plots and Persons in Fiction. Living Age, v. 259, p. 515.

make or mar our lives on this earth. This is surely one of the main truths of the novel that deals with human nature. If the novelist has the creative ability to bring real, well-rounded characters into life at all, they will work out their lives quite independently of their authors. Thus, Thackeray is astounded at the sayings of his characters and asks them where they got their notions; Charlotte Brontë groans because the heroine whom she intended to be a most beautiful character will give place to the very imperfect one in Villette; and who would suppose that Dickens deliberately decided where David Copperfield should meet Micawber?

An illustration of how this kind of a determining character is actually evolved is cited by Henry James in describing the method of Turgeniev as follows:[1]

> Nothing that Turgeniev had to say could be more interesting than his talk about his own work, his manner of writing. What I have heard him tell of these things was worthy of the beautiful results he produced; of the deep purpose, pervading them all, to show us life itself. The germ of a story, with him, was never an affair of plot - that was the last thing he thought of; it was the representation of certain persons. The first form in which a tale appeared to him was as the figure of an individual, or a combination of individuals, whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting. They stood before him definite, vivid, and he wished to know, and to show, as much as possible their nature. The first thing was to make clear to himself what he did know to begin with; and to this end he wrote out a sort of biography of

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1. Perry, Bliss. A Study of Prose Fiction. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903, p. 94.

each of his characters, and everything that they had done and that had happened to them up to the opening of the story. He had their dossier, as the French say, and as the police has that of every conspicuous criminal. With this material in his hand he was able to proceed; the story all lay in the question, What shall I make them do? He always made them do the things that showed them completely.....

Subtle as such an art of characterization is, it is easy to see that all characterization is done either directly or indirectly, or, as the case usually is, by a combination of these two. According to the first method, traits of character are conveyed directly to the reader through some sort of statement by the writer of the story; according to the second method, characteristics are conveyed indirectly to the reader through a necessary inference, on his part, from the speech, action, and thoughts of the character in the narrative itself. Of the two methods of characterization, direct and indirect, indirect delineation has always been held to be vastly superior to the direct form from the artistic point of view. This is a very logical one since we know from our own experience that we are much more likely to form our opinion of a person's character through what that person says or does rather than from what some other person says of him. Thus we find that an author, to be convincing, should characterize chiefly through behavior. The acts, the words, the thoughts can never be properly told about, can never be hearsay. He may talk or comment upon his characters to direct his reading, but it is in the

behavior of this character - that is, through indirect characterization - that we really come to know the character. Obviously, it would be false to say that all direct characterization is bad or that all indirect characterization is good, for like any method of procedure the success of either method depends almost wholly upon the skill and the insight that the writer brings to his work. That much of the worst direct characterization of a good writer is superior to the best indirect characterization of a mediocre writer is obvious. The fact is that the methods are mutually dependent upon each other in the production of a well-rounded, readily recognized character, and that the great novelists in their versatility and abundance show a happy welding together of both methods.

Thus, no matter how adroitly an author may prepare one for the physical and mental traits of a character, unless his actions verify this introduction, the preparation has been a waste of words. Jane Austen's method is illuminating in this respect. She always characterized directly. She tells the reader right off in her lucid, common-sense manner what the newcomer is like, but her direct characterization is invariably followed, and at once, by a scene in which the new person moves, lives, breathes, and has his whole being in an embodiment of everything that has been promised before him.

Thus, whether she was aware of it or not, Jane Austen was being truly scientific in the treatment of her characters. She is demonstrating, then proving. Her direct characterization represents an economy of the reader's attention. She has given us the stage directions before opening the play.

In further attempting to set up an ideal of characterization I shall quote illustrations of the commonly accepted methods of characterization as they are handled by well-recognized masters.

Under the direct methods of characterization, the first method I shall consider is that of exposition, that is, a deliberate explanation, on the part of the author, of a character's nature. I have chosen for an example of this method a quotation from the novel Eugenie Grandet by Honore Balzac:[1]

> Eugenie was a woman of thirty, and as yet had known none of the happiness of life. All through her joyless, monotonous childhood she had had but one companion, the broken-spirited mother whose sensitive nature had found little but suffering in a hard life. That mother had joyfully taken leave of existence, pitying the daughter, who must still live on in the world. Eugenie would never lose the sense of her loss, but little of the bitterness of self-reproach mingled with her memories of her mother.
>
> Love, her first and only love, had been a fresh source of suffering for Eugenie. For a few brief days she had seen her lover; she had given her heart to him between two stolen

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1. Balzac, Honore. Eugenie Grandet. Croscup and Sterling Company, New York, pp. 187, 188.

kisses; then he had left her and had set the lands and the seas of the world between them. Her father had cursed her for this love; it had nearly cost her her mother's life; it had brought her pain and sorrow and a few faint hopes. She had striven towards her happiness till her own forces had failed her, and another had come to her age.

Our souls live by giving and receiving; we have need of another; whatever it gives us we make our own, and give back again in overflowing measure. This is as vitally necessary for our own inner life as breathing is for our corporeal existence. Without that wonderful physical process we perish. The heart suffers from lack of air, and ceases to beat. Eugenie was beginning to suffer.

She found no solace in her wealth; it could do nothing for her; her love, her religion, her faith in the future, made up all her life. Love was teaching her what eternity meant. Her own heart and the gospel each spoke to her of a life to come; life was everlasting, and love no less eternal. Night and day she dwelt with these two infinite thoughts, perhaps for her they were but one. She withdrew more and more into herself; she loved, and believed that she was loved.

The secret of the success of this exposition lies, I believe, in its concentration and its clearness. Even if a person had not read another word of the story, this page of exposition would give him a fair understanding of the innocent and the trusting character of Eugenie as well as an essential penetration into the pathos of her life experiences. The exposition summarizes the sum total of the abstract ideas that underlie the story of Eugenie and yet Balzac has given these same abstract ideas to us in concrete form. The exposition here is painstaking, succinct, every word of interpretation counts toward a revelation of character.

A second method of direct characterization is through

description. I have selected Joseph Conrad as the novelist to demonstrate the effectiveness of description as an aid to characterization:[1]

It comes to me now that I had, on the whole, seen very little of her. What I remember best is the even, olive pallor of her complexion, and the intense blue-black gleams of her hair, flowing abundantly from under a small crimson cap she wore far back on her shapely head. Her movements were free, assured, and she blushed a dusky red. While Jim and I were talking, she would come and go with rapid glances at us, leaving on her passage an impression of grace and charm and a distinct suggestion of watchfulness. Her manner presented a curious combination of shyness and audacity. Every pretty smile was succeeded swiftly by a look of silent, repressed anxiety, as if to put to flight by the recollection of some abiding danger. At times she would sit down with us and, with her soft cheek dimpled by the knuckles of her little hand, she would listen to our talk; her big clear eyes would remain fastened on our lips, as though each pronounced word had a visible shape. Her mother had taught her to read and write; she had learned a good bit of English from Jim, and she spoke it most amusingly, with his own clipping, boyish intonation. Her tenderness hovered over him like the flutter of wings. She lived so completely in his contemplation that she had acquired something of his outward aspect, something that recalled him in her movements, in the way she stretched her arm, turned her head, directed her glances. Her vigilant affection had an intensity that made it almost perceptible to the senses; it seemed actually to exist in the ambient matter of space, to envelop him like a peculiar fragrance, to dwell in the sunshine like a tremulous, subdued, and impassioned note.

The important thing to note in this description is the unusual number of genuinely experienced sensory impressions that the author conveys to the reader. There is enough

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1. Conrad, Joseph. Lord Jim. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1927, pp. 282, 283.

concrete detail in his description of the girl's glances, movements, eyes, manner of smiling, hair-color, complexion, and intonation of speech to make each of these aspects nearly, if not wholly, a separate reality. Likewise, the description includes enough movement to make the sensory appeals clear and interesting.

The method of psychological analysis is that of delineating the character by means of a statement partly expository and partly narrative of what is taking place within the mind of the fictitious person, based upon an analysis of his thoughts and his emotions at important moments of the story. To illustrate this method in excellent form, I have chosen a quotation from Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary which reflects the mind of Emma Bovary just after she has acquired her first lover:[1]

> "I have a lover! a lover!" she kept repeating to herself, delighting in this idea as if it were in the thought of a second maidenhood come to her. At last, then, she was about to possess those joys of love, that fever of bliss, of which she had despaired. She stood on the threshold of some marvelous world where all was going to be passion, ecstasy, delirium; an immensity, blue-tinged, surrounded her; the heights of sentiment sparkled in the rays of her fancy, an ordinary existence appeared only far away, quite below, in the shade of the hollows between those peaks.
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> Next she summoned to mind the heroines of the books she had read, and the lyric legion of those adulterous women

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1. Flaubert, Gustave. Madame Bovary. P. F. Collier and Son, New York, 1902, p. 199.

began to sing in her m[illegible]th sisterly voices that fascinated her. Herself she became, as it were, a veritable part of these imaginings, and realized the long dream of her youth in joining herself to that type of amorous woman which had aroused in her so great an envy. Besides, Emma felt a certain satisfaction of revenge. How much had she not suffered! But now was her hour of triumph, and love, so long repressed, could burst forth at last unrestrained, with joyous overflowings. She sucked its sweet without remorse, without disquiet, without anxiety.

Here we are given a significant glimpse into the character of Emma Bovary by the play of Flaubert's imagination upon the romantically determined mind of his subject. The quotation is made still more pertinent by the fact that it is purely objective and represents not only Emma's state of mind but it represents the etate, actual and potential, of all persons like her - persons romantically imaginative and determined.

Passing to the matter of direct quotation by the thoughts, speech, and action of the character himself, I shall demonstrate how the thoughts of an individual may characterize, by a quotation from Ivan Turgeniev's Smoke in which the mental battle of his protagonist, Litvinov, between his duty to his betrothed, Tanya, and his passion for Irina is presented:[1]

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1. Turgeniev, Ivan. Smoke. The MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, pp. 185, 186, 187. 1896.

Litvinov did not sleep all night, and did not undress. He was very miserable. As an honest and straightforward man, he realized the force of obligations, the sacredness of duty, and would have been ashamed of any double dealing with himself, his weakness, his fault. At first he was overcome by apathy; it was long before he could throw off from my burden of single, half-conscious, obscure sensations; then terror took possession of him at the thought that the future, his almost conquered future had slipped back into the darkness, that his home, the solidly-built home he had only just raised, was suddenly tottering about him.....

He began reproaching himself without mercy, but at once checked his own vehemence. "What feebleness!" he thought. "It's no time for self-reproach and contrition; now I must act. Tanya is my betrothed, she has faith in my love, my honour; we are bound together for life, and cannot, must not, be put asunder." He vividly pictured to himself all Tanya's qualities; mentally he picked them out and reckoned them up; he was trying to call up feeling and tenderness in himself. "One thing's left for me," he thought again, "to run away, to run away directly, without awaiting for her arrival, to hasten to meet her; whether I suffer, whether I am wretched with Tanya - that's not likely - but in any case to think of that, to take that into consideration is useless; I must do my duty, if I die for it!" "But you have no right to deceive her," whispered another voice within him. "You have no right to hide from her the change in your feelings; it may be that when she knows you love another woman she will not be willing to become your wife?" "Rubbish!" he answered, "that's all sophistry, shameful double-dealing, deceitful conscientiousness; I have no right not to keep my word that's the thing. Well, so be it..... Then I must go away from here without seeing the other....."

But at that point Litvinov's heart throbbed with anguish, he turned cold, physically cold; a momentary shiver passed over him, his teeth chattered weakly. He stretched and yawned, as though he were in a fever. Without dwelling longer on his last thought, choking back that thought, turning away from it, he set himself to marveling and wondering in perplexity how he could again.....again love that corrupt, worldly creature, all of whose surroundings were so hateful, so repulsive to him. He tried to put to himself the questions: "What nonsense; do you love her?" And could only wring his hands in despair. He was still marveling and wondering, and suddenly there rose up before his eyes, as though from a soft fragrant mist, a seductive shape, shining eyelashes were lifted, and softly and irresistably the marvelous eyes pierced him to the heart and a voice was singing with

sweetness in his ears, and resplendent shoulders, the shoulders of a young queen, were breathing with voluptuous freshness and warmth.....

Careful reading of the above quotation will show the reader how skilfully Turgeniev has reproduced the two natures fighting within the mind of Litvinov. His passionate weakness for Irina and his conscientious duty toward Tanya are both given tangible expression by his thoughts. His determined reasoning falls a prey to his vision of the voluptuous Irina. The mental process given probably did not take more than a few minutes within the mind, yet Turgeniev has given us every reaction of his hero with an exactness and an immediacy that brings him close to our feelings and consciousness.

As an example of dexterous presentation of a character through his action and speech I have chosen the opening pages of Markheim by Robert Louis Stevenson:[1]

"Yes," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend of my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest." And here he held up the candle so that the light fell strongly on his visitor. "And in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words,

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1. Stevenson, Robert Louis. Will of the Mill and Markheim. Little Leather Association, New York, 1915, pp. 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62.

and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas Day," he resumed, "when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that; you will have to pay for my loss of time when I should be balancing my books; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you today very strongly. I am the essence of discretion and ask no awkward questions; but when a customer can not look me in the eye, he has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled; and then, changing to his usual business voice, though with still a note of irony, "You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into possession of the object?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet? A remarkable collector, sir!"

And the little pale, round-shouldered dealer almost stood on tip toe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim roturned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

"This time," said he, "you are in error. I have not come to sell but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock-Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand today is simplicity itself. I see a Christmas present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as if struck into the speech he had prepared; "and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is a thing not to be neglected."

There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

"Well, sir," said the dealer, "be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to be an obstacle. Here is a nice thing for a lady now," he observed, "this hand glass - fifteenth century, warranted; comes from a good selection, too; but I reserve the name in the interest of my customer, who was just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and soul heir of a remarkable collector."

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and

as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It had passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

"A glass," he said hoarsely, then paused, and repeated it more clearly, "a glass? for Christmas? surely not?"

"And why not?" cried the dealer. "Why not a glass?"

Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. "You ask me why not?" he said. "Why look there - look in it - look at yourself! Do you like to see it? No! Nor I - nor any man."

The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. 'Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favored,' said he.

"I ask you," said Markheim, 'for a Christmas present and you give me this - this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies - this hand-conscience! Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that you are in secret a very charitable man?"

The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd, Markheim did not appear to be laughing; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

"What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

"Not charitable?" returned the other, gloomily. "Not charitable; not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man is that all?"

"I will tell you what it is," began the dealer, with some sharpness and then broke off again in a chuckle. "But I see this is a love match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

"Ah!" cried Markheim with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

"I," cried the dealer, "I in love. I never had the time nor have I the time today for all this nonsense. Will you take the glass?"

"Where is the hurry?" returned Markheim. "It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure - no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it - a cliff a mile high - high enough, if we fall, to dash us out

of every feature of human life. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk of each other; why should we wear this mask? Let us be confidential. Between friends, at least because friends?

"I have just one word to say to you," said the dealer. "Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop."

"True, true," said Markheim. "Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else."

The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blond hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his great-coat; he drew himself up and filled his lungs; at the same time many different emotions were depicted on his face - terror, horror, resolve, fascination, and physical repulsion; and through a haggard lift of his upper lip his teeth looked out.

"This perhaps may suit," observed the dealer; and then as he began to re-arise, Markheim bounded from behind on his victim. The long, skewer-like dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple upon the shelf and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

This selection is remarkable because in it there is scarcely a trace of analysis; the method is almost purely objective to the point of the murder. Very early in the quotation we realize that Markheim is a rogue who has disposed of stolen articles to the dealer. Our attention is aroused when the dealer says that Markheim's manner is so odd and we wonder why Markheim gazes upon the dealer with pity, an unusual emotion in such a character. In the next speech we realize as well as the dealer that Markheim is lying. When the dealer stoops to get the glass, we wonder at the play of emotion on Markheim's face. We know that Markheim is excited, and that he is premeditating some evil

action, for his expression changes when the dealer straightens up again. He tries to make friends with the dealer, because he is wishing for an escape from a crime that he is reluctant to commit. The mirror serves as an excellent device, for Markheim shows his terror and fear again of the man who fears what he is and will soon become. The character of Markheim grows distinct before our eyes, for character and action are here inseperable and we anticipate the crime before it happens. Markheim's words are even more significant than his actions. Again he moves the dealer, in those suspicions we see reflected the image of Markheim himself. And, last we have brief descriptive touches of the man's appearance, which suggest the passions within. Every word that Markheim himself speaks tells in the gradual development of our idea of his character.

No ideal of characterization would be complete without some comments on the problem and method of portraying the changing character. To show a character developing under stress or ripening easily beneath beneficient influencos, or gradually deteriorating under adverse circumstances, is one of the greatest possibilities in the whole field of fiction-writing. Likewise, it is one of the most powerful modes of affecting the sympathy and interest of the reader.

It is impossible to quote from any master novelist as to his method of developing character, simply because it very often takes the full length of the novel to unfold this courage. Selden Whitcomb has this to say on the general subject of character change and how it is effected:[1]

The slow shaping of character is one of the problems of the novel. Character development may be conceived as mainly an unfolding of original tendency, often with a distinct emphasis on heredity, or as the result of natural or social environment, the influence of the supernatural or the will of the character himself. The last process is called "characterization" by Giddings in his inductive sociology and its principal methods are persistence, accommodation self-denial, and self-control. The development of a character is generally greatly modified not only by reactions upon the traditions, habits, and wills, of social groups, but by the individual to other individuals. The influence of the individual on individual can be more extensively and more intensively studied in the novel than in any other form of art, and more concretely than in sociology. Character development may follow any number of lines; general culture, emotional power, artistic genius, public influence, theological belief. The study that appeals most forcibly to the novelist is moral development upward or downward.

Surely, if the character is to appear convincing in his development or in his deterioration, the novelist must show in his book not only a lapse in time but a lapse in actual moral experience. The character needs eternal human happenings to mould his character, be it upward or downward. The character must change naturally, and divest himself of

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1. Whitcomb, Selden L. The Study of a Novel. D. C. Heath and Company, pp. 124-125. 1905.

his former habits only when his experience has been exhibited as dynamic and decisive enough to produce such a change on the character who has already been introduced into the mind of the reader. This gradual alteration may be accomplished sometimes by going slowly, keeping down the narrative tone so as to be as quiet and as colorless as life often is in the intervals between high moments. The novelist must show the situations, through which the character is passing, that are changing the contour of his life; and the character must be seen emerging from these experiences profoundly the same, yet scarred by lines of suffering and experience. The incidents that enrich or pollute the character must convince us with their potentialities of good or evil. The decisions that the character is obliged to make must be revelant, gripping us with their importance and immediacy; and the final fate that the character bows under, or rises above, should seem inevitable to the reader who has followed the character carefully through the book. In short, the author must have such a hold on the main lines of his characters that they will emerge modified and yet themselves from the ripening and disintegrating years.

This growth or retrogression in character draws the

following comment from Trollope:[1]

> In the novel, as in the outer world, we know that men and women change, become worse or better as temptation or conscience may guide them, so should these creations of his change, should be noted by him. On the last day of each month recorded, every person in his novel should be one month older than the first.....

SOURCES OF GEORGE ELIOT'S CHARACTERS

Of initial interest in a study of an author's character delineation the question arises as to the source of the persons who people his novels. Either he observes them directly in the actual world, or he hears or reads about them, and thus appropriates the experience of other persons, or finally he may imagine his characters. As far as direct observation is concerned, it is obvious that any man's or woman's experience with various types or specimens of human character is necessarily limited by his environs and his travel; yet the difference between various novelists in this respect must be singularly great. If one compares the variety and extent of humanity that fell under the eye of Joseph Conrad or Rudyard Kipling with the types with which Charlotte Brontë or Jane Austen was personally acquainted, the advantage is all with the first two. Yet these examples will

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1. Plots and Persons in Fiction. Living Age, v. 259, p. 515.

suggest the fact that a wide acquaintance with the different forms of human nature is by no means essential to the highest achievement in character-drawing. A novelist like Hawthorne, held within the narrowest limits of experience and acquaintance, was able to draw life with a faithful precision that would put the most cosmopolitan globe trotter to shame.

Besides personal observation and experience a great deal of the material of the novelist comes to him indirectly through his conversation and his reading. The four novels of George Eliot that I have studied fall into two classes as far as the sources of the characters are concerned. In Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, and Middlemarch she has drawn exhaustively from her experiences and observations as a girl in Warwickshire and Coventry. Romola on the other hand is the product of arduous research among the dusty volumes of Florentine libraries. A list of the books she read during the last half of 1861 in preparation for this novel gives some illustration of the course of study. Among them are Villari's and Burlamacchi's lives of Savonarola, Machiavelli, Petrarch, and other Italian authors, Sismondi's history of the Italian republics, besides various excursions into Gibbon, Hallam, Heeren, and Muratori. Leslie Stephen's quotation from her diary at this time shows how

conscientious she was in her research:[1]

> I have been detained from writing by the necessity of gathering particulars, first, about Lorenzo de' Medici's death; secondly, about the possible detardation of Easter; third, about Savonarola's preaching in the Quaresima in 1492.

But we may be sure that a character is never taken wholesale from life or from laborious reading but is developed from its germ, whatever it may be, with such additions or omissions as bring out the artist's concept of his character. The higher the art, the more scope there is for suggestion. Thus, imagination has an increasing role in remoulding memories of objects or persons. We may be assured that the novelist always wants something a little bit different from that which he has seen or read about. The basis of his character will always rest to a certain extent upon self-knowledge but will likewise be tempered and moulded by his imagination.

The matter of character-selection brings forth one of George Eliot's most emphasized tenets of art, namely, that she would write of commonplace men and women. Her books are replete with expressions of this adherence to simple folk as inspiration for her study. In The Sad Misfortunes of the

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1. Stephen, Leslie. George Eliot. The MacMillan Company, New York, 1902, p. 123.

Reverend Amos Barton, one of her earliest attempts at fiction-writing, she addresses her readers as follows:[1]

> At least eighty out of a hundred of your adult male fellow-Britons returned in the last census are neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise; their eyes are neither deep and liquid with sentiment, nor sparkling with suppressed witticisms; they have probably had no hair breadth escapes or thrilling adventures; their brains are simply not pregnant with genius and their passions have not manifested themselves at all after the fashion of a volcano. They are simply men of complexions more or less muddy, whose conservation is more or less bald and disjointed. Yet these commonplace people - many of them - bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime promptings to do the painful right; they have their unspoken sorrows, and their sacred joys; their hearts have perhaps gone out toward their first-born, and they have mourned over the irreclaimable dead. Nay, is there not a pathos in their very insignificance - in our comparison of their dim and narrow existence with the glorious possibilities of that human nature which they share?.... Depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull gray eyes and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones.

Likewise, the opening pages of the second book of Adam Bede are devoted to an extensive exposition of her sources of characters and of her eagerness to give a truthful and sympathetic account of their lives:[2]

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1. Eliot, George. The Sad Misfortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton. John W. Lowell Company, New York, p. 45.
2. Eliot, George. Adam Bede. A. L. Burt Publishing Company, New York, p. 181.

I turn, without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, from sibyls, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower-pot, or even her solitary dinner, while the noonday light, softened perhaps by a screen of leaves, falls on her mob-cap, and just touches the rim of her spinning-wheel, and her stone jug, and all those cheap common things which are the precious necessarie of life to her.....

Turning from the general field from which George Eliot selects her characters to specific incidents of portraiture that she has drawn from her own life, one finds a number of very close alliances between actual persons and her characters as well as between settings and familiar geographic surroundings. For George Eliot is the Alma Mater of Middle Mercia. One cannot separate the greatest part of her literary work from the geographic surroundings and provincial people of her youth.

Adam Bede, the first novel under consideration, is particularly rich in allusions to country places and village people whose inhabitants today are only too glad to claim their relation to George Eliot's novels. Yet it is known that is was at Ellastone that Robert Evans, George Eliot's father, passed his early years and worked as a carpenter with his brother, Samuel; and it was partly from reminiscences of her father's talk and from her uncle Samuel's wife's preaching experience that she constructed Adam Bede. It is generally accepted that Adam and Seth Bede

were her father and uncle idealized, and Dinah Morris was her uncle's wife similarly treated while Ellastone figured as Hayslope, the town next to Hayslope, Ashbourne as Oakbourne, Norbury as Norbourne, and Dovedale as Eaglebourne; Staffordsville and Derbyshire were respectively Loamshire and Stonyshire. The Bromley Arms is the Donnithorne Arms of the story and the description of the village green is close to actual fact, although the author had but little acquaintance with the place but depended upon remembered conversation with her father. Ashbourne, called Oakbourne in the story, the town through which Adam Bede walked in his search for Hetty Sorrel, is another place whose actuality tallies well with Eliot's description of it.

There exists, today, in Wirkfield (the Snowfield of the novel) a "Bede Memorial Chapel" erected to the glory of God, and in memory of Elizabeth Evans immortalized as Dinah Morris, and in the same town a marble tablet commemorates the life-work of Seth Bede and Dinah Morris.

The prototype for the character of Adam Bede has always been thought to be George Eliot's father, Robert Evans, as a youth, and there is much evidence to substantiate such a view. Stephen in his biography of the author has this to say

about Mr. Evans:[1]

Robert Evans was brought up in his father's business, and improved his position by remarkable qualities. He possessed great vigour both of mind and body, and was one of the men to whom love of good work is a religion. Once, when two laborers were waiting for a third to carry a heavy ladder, he took the whole weight upon his shoulders and astonished them by carrying it to its destination without help. He had also the keen eye of a skilled workman, and was especially famous for a power of calculating with singular accuracy the quantity of lumber in a standing tree.

Comparing these facts with those in the book some striking analogies may be made. The book opens with a scene in the carpenter shop where Adam and his brother, Seth, are working; they are following the trade of their father, Thias Bede; an incident happens early in the book that demonstrates Adam's superior physical strength, and this description of Adam has many points in common with the one given above:[2]

Such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned muscular man nearly six feet high, with a back so flat and a head so well poised that when he drew himself up to take a more distant survey of his work he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the long supple hand, with its broad fingertips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name; but the jet-black

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1. Stephen, Leslie. George Eliot. The MacMillan Company, New York, 1902, p. 1.
2. Adam Bede. Loc. cit., p. 6.

hair, made the more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen glance of the dark eyes that shone from under strongly marked, prominent, and mobile brows, indicated a mixture of Celtic blood. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humored, honest intelligence.

The Phrase, "A man to whom love of good work is religion", has its comparison in this speech of Adam in the book:[1]

I know a man must have the love o' God in his soul, and the Bible's God's word. But what does the Bible say? Why, it says as God put His sperrit into the workman as built the tabernacle, to make him do all the carved work and things as wanted a nice hand. And this is my way o' looking at it: there's the sperrit o' God in all things and all times - weekday as well as Sunday - and i' the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics. And God helps us with our headpieces and our hands as well as with our souls; and if a man does bits o' jobs out o' working hours - builds an oven for 's wife to save her from walking to the bakehouse, or scrats at his bit o' garden and makes two potatoes grow instead o' one, he's doing more good, and he's just as near God as if he was running after some preacher and a-praying and a-groaning.

As for the corresponding "power of calculating" this quotation is illuminating:[2]

His (Adam's) acquaintance with mechanics and figures and the nature of the materials he worked with was made easy to him by inborn inherited faculty.....

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1. Adam Bede. Loc. cit., p. 10.
2. Ibid., p. 216-217.

The wife of Robert Evans, Marian's mother, was shrewd and sharp, a diligent housewife, and given to sarcastic speech. I believe that there was much of Mrs. Poyser in her nature.

The question of whether Dinah Morris was a portrait of Elizabeth Evans, aunt of George Eliot, is a controversial one with considerable evidence on both sides. However, a letter of George Eliot's written in 1859 to Miss Sara Hennell contradicts much of the easy assumption that has been written on the subject:[1]

> I should like, while the subject is vividly present with me to tell you more exactly than I have ever yet done, what I know of my aunt, Elizabeth Evans. There was hardly any intercourse between my father's family, resident in Derbyshire and Staffordsville, and our family - few and far-off visits of (to my childish feelings) strange uncles and aunts from my father's far-off country, and once a journey of my own, as a little child, with my father and my mother, to see my uncle William, a rich builder in Staffordville - but not my uncle and aunt Samuel, so far as I can recall the dim outline of things, are what I remember of northerly relations in my childhood..... But when I was seventeen or more - after my sister was married and I was mistress of the house - my father took a journey into Derbyshire, in which, visiting my uncle and aunt Samuel, who were very poor and lived in a humble cottage at Wirksworth, he found my aunt in a very delicate state of health following a serious illness, and, to do her bodily good, he persuaded me to return with him, telling her that I should be

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1. Lanier, Sidney. The English Novel: A Study in the Development of Personality. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1897, pp. 166,167,168,169.

very, very happy to have her with me a few weeks.... I was delighted to see my aunt. Although I had only heard her spoken of as a strange person, given to a fanatical vehemence of exhortation in private as well as public, I believed that we should find sympathy between us. She was then an old woman - above sixty - and, I believe, had for a good many years given up preaching. A tiny little woman, with bright, small dark eyes, and hair that had been black, I imagine, but now gray - a pretty woman in her youth but of a totally different physical type from Dinah. The difference, as you will believe, was not simply physical; no difference is. She was a woman of strong natural excitability, which, I know from the description I have heard my father and half-sister give, prevented her from the exercise of discretion under the promptings of her zeal. But this vehemence was now subdued by age and sickness; she was very gentle and quiet in her manners.... There was nothing highly distinctive in her religious conversation.... (the letter then gives the statements that were cited in Mr. Buckley's article and then continues with these words). I saw my aunt twice after this. Once I spent a day and a night with my father in the Wirksworth cottage, sleeping with my aunt, I remember. Our interview was less interesting than in the former time; I think I was less simply devoted to religious ideas. And once again she came with my uncle to see me, when father and I were living; then, there was some pain, for I had given up the form of Christian belief and was in a crude state of free-thinking. She stayed about three or four days, I think. This is all I remember distinctly as matter I could write down of my dear aunt, whom I really loved. You see how she suggested Dinah; but it is not possible you should see as I do how entirely her individuality differed from Dinah's. How curious it seemed to me that people should think Dinah's sermon, prayers, and speeches were copied - when they were written with hot tears as they surged up in my own mind!... As to my indebtedness to facts of local and personal history of a small kind connected with Staffordsville and Derbyshire, you may imagine of what kind that is when I tell you that I never remained in either of those countries more than a few days altogether, and of only two such visits have I more than a shadowy, interrupted recollection. The details which I knew as facts, and have made use of for my picture, were gathered from such imperfect allusion and narrative as I heard from my father in his occasional talk about old times.... As to my aunt's children or grandchildren saying, if they did say, that Dinah is a good

portrait of my aunt - that is the vague, easily satisfied notion imperfectly instructed people always have of portraits. It is not surprising that simple men and women without pretension to enlightened discrimination should think a generic resemblance constitutes a portrait, when we see the great public so accustomed to be delighted with misrepresentations of life and character, which they accept as representations, that they are scandalized when art makes a nearer approach to truth.

The character of Dinah had a basis in the conscientiousness and warm sympathy of George Eliot herself.

Passing on to the sources of character in her next novel, The Mill on the Floss, one finds that the setting of the book centers about a region far away from the author's home, for the town of St. Oggs is in reality Gainsborough and the river Floss is the Trent. George Eliot paid a visit to Gainsborough in 1845 when she was a guest of the Reverend Frederick von Sturmer at Norton Hall beside the river not quite two miles from the town. It was in that year, 1845, that the National Schools Bazaar was held at the Old Hall at Gainsborough as described in the story.

Maggie Tulliver, the heroine of the story, is George Eliot as she saw herself or would have liked to see herself; of a simple, noble beauty, not the plain woman with the thick coarse, open lips that her portraits disclose. In temperament Maggie was like Marian Evans, the same impulsive

nature but possessed the bodily perfections her creator did not have. Weygandt says in his discussion of George Eliot:[1]

> There was enough of Marian Evans for her to fashion herself in so differing a character as Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Romola Brado.... Although George Eliot has put so much of herself into so many of her heroines no one of them is very like another. There is no running to type.

Granting that this is true there is little doubt but that Maggie Tulliver is the heroine who embodies the greatest number of the aspects of her many-sided creator. Maggie, from her childhood up, is plainly the spiritual "double" of Marian Evans. The attic to which Maggie escaped to seek solace from the cruel indifference of her brother Tom or for communion with her beloved Thomas Kempis was an actual attic in the Evans home. Maggie must have been close to Eliot's own heart and experience or how else could she give such reality to Maggie's wayward foibles associated with her nobler impulses, or dwell so lovingly upon all her joys and sorrows or share so intimately all the struggles of her poor encumbered soul?

The love of the brother and sister, Tom and Maggie Tulliver, is that which Marian Evans felt for her brother Isaac. The childhood of these two that is idyllically

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1. Weygandt. A Century of English Novel. Century Company, New York, 1925, p. 180.

presented in the first book of The Mill on the Floss is no doubt analogous to George Eliot's own. Her own close affinity for her brother in their early childhood years is appealingly set forth in her sonnet sequence Brother and Sister with its exquisite conclusion:[1]

"But were another childhood-world my share
I would be born a little sister there."

Middlemarch is primarily a portrait of the circles which had been most familiar to George Eliot in her youth spent in Coventry, as its second title "a study of provincial life" signifies. Caleb Garth, like Adam Bede, owes something to George Eliot's father, Robert Evans. But this book, unlike Adam Bede, gives a picture of Robert Evans in his age and particularly in his role as a land agent. One phase of Mr. Evans' character that is particularly reflected in the person of Caleb Garth is his self-distrust and consequent submissiveness in domestic relations, based principally on his want of prudence in the management of the family income. This aspect of Caleb Garth's character is the subject of this quotation:[2]

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1. Eliot, George. Poems. Harpers and Brothers, New York, p. 71.
2. Eliot, George. Middlemarch. Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, New York, 1899, p. 226.

In fact he had a reverential soul with a strong practical intelligence. But he could not manage finance; he knew values well, but he had no keenness of imagination for monetary results in the shape of profit and loss, he determined to give up all forms of his beloved "business" that required that talent. He gave himself up entirely to the many kinds of work which he could do without handling capital, and was one of those precious men within his own district whom everybody would choose to work for them, and often declined to charge at all. It is small wonder, then, that tho Garths were poor, and "lived in a small way". However, they did not mind it.

As to Mr. Evans' ability as a land agent, his daughter has this to say:[1]

His extensive knowledge in very varied practical departments made his services valued through several counties. He had large knowledge of mines, plantations, of various branches of valuation and measurement - of all that is essential to the management of large estates.

Notice how closely this corresponds to what she has to say about Caleb Garth:[2]

Caleb Garth often shook his head in meditation on the value, the indispensable might of that myriad-headed, myriad-handed labor by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed. It laid hold of his imagination in boyhood. The echoes of the great hammer where roof or keel were a-making, the signal-shouts of the workmen, the roar of the furnace, the thunder and plash of the engine, were a sublime music to him; the felling and lading of timber, and the huge trunk vibrating star-like in the distance along the highway, the crane at work on the wharf, the piled-up produce in ware-

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1. Stephen, Leslie. George Eliot. The MacMillan Company, New York, 1902, pp. 1,2.
2. Eliot, George. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., pp. 225, 226.

houses, the precision and the variety of muscular effort wherever exact work had to be turned out - all these sights of his youth had acted on him as poetry without the aid of the poets, had made a philosophy for him without the aid of the philosophers, a religion without the aid of theology. His early ambition had been to have as effective a share as possible in this sublime labor, which was peculiarly dignified by him with the name of "business"; and though he had only been a short time under a surveyor, and had been chiefly his own teacher, he knew more of land, building, and mining than most of the special men in the county.

Dorothea Brooke, the heroine of Middlemarch, is another of George Eliot's dreams of herself. The part of her author that Dorothea idealizes in particular is her humanitarian spirit. Eliot's humanitarian spirit is described by a biographer in this quotation:[1]

She thoroughly believed in the sympathetic good there is in life, and she was anxious to increase the sum of it by every effort of her own. In the growth of good she heartily had faith. In the times to come she thought men would care more for the development of the humanitarian spirit than they do now, and that a wide-spreading and helpfulness for the human race would be awakened, that would lift mankind to a higher form of life. This coming good of the race was to her an article of the sincerest faith, and she looked forward to that good in all her thoughts about mankind.

Dorothea in conversation with Will Ladislaw expresses much the same belief:[2]

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1. A Life of George Eliot. John W. Lovell Company, New York, p. 483.
2. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., p. 352.

"I have a belief of my own, and it comforts me."

"What is that?" said Will, rather jealous of the belief.

"That by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are a part of the divine power against evil - widening the skirt of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower. Please do not call it by any name," said Dorothea, putting out her hands entreatingly. "You will say it is Persian, or something else geographical. It is my life. I have found it out, and cannot part with it."

A distinct change in source of material is noticed in preparation for the writing of Romola. In this book she forsook the familiar scenes and acquaintances of her own country and visited Florence, and read all that came in her way on Florentine art and manners and history in the fifteenth century, ploughing her way through thick quartos. She deals with a private history and the great public characters of that time. The picture of Savonarola is reconstructed out of the wealth of material she was able to read about him. The characters of Tito Melema, Baldassarre and other Florentines are the product of her own imagination coupled with what she was able to absorb of the spirit and of the manners of the time of the Renaissance. In the character of Romola one encounters still another sort of physical apothesis of Marian Evans and one very like her in her devotion to her exacting father.

GEORGE ELIOT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HER CHARACTERS

With these sources of character in mind, the next question to consider is what is the attitude of George Eliot toward these characters created out of her experience and imagination. The novelist is the social sponsor of his own fictitious characters and as such necessarily maintains a feeling toward them. Does she admire her characters, pity them, make fun of them, hate them or love them?

In surveying the field of novelists one notices two extremes and a middle reaction toward characters. Sometimes the novelist seems to bear an undisguised love and admiration for his characters. Thackeray had such a feeling toward Colonel Newcome in The Newcomes and toward Arthur Pendennis. Theopile Guatier, of the French romantic school, has an attitude of near-worship toward his hero and heroine. Conversely there are numerous examples in French fiction--the work of Guy de Maupassant and Gustave Flaubert, his master, affording constant instances of the author looking down upon his characters in an attitude of cool, analytic detachment that sometimes approaches hostility. Flaubert in his celebrated Madame Bovary regards the struggles of Emma much as a biologist studies the nerve reaction of an insect pinned to his table for the purpose of experiment.

These strictest artists of fiction, Maupassant and Flaubert, prefer to tell their tales impersonally; they leave their characters rigidly alone and allow the reader to see them without looking through the author's personality. Thus the self-obliterating author endeavors to hide his own opinions of judgment concerning them, but the author who writes personally does not hesitate to reveal, or even to express directly his admiration of a character's merits or his deprecation of a character's defects. This quotation from Thackeray's Vanity Fair is an expression of the attutude that has the glow of personal emotion in it:[1]

> As we bring our characters forward I will ask leave, as a man and brother, not only to introduce them but occasionally to step down from the platform and talk about them; if they are good and kindly to love them and shake them by the hand; if they are silly to laugh at them confidentially in the reader's sleeve; if they are wicked and heartless to abuse them in the strongest terms which politeness admits of.

This intention he carries out fully in the chapters that follow; he chats with his reader in his own person until he finally ends:[2]

> Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets for our play is played out.

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1. Thackeray, William M. Vanity Fair. Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1924, pp. 93,94

2. Ibid., p. 753.

On the other hand one may seek in vain studying the characters of Guy de Maupassant for any indication of the author's approval or disapproval of them.

There is, however, a happier mean between these extremes, namely, when the novelist seems to place himself on a level with his characters, looks them frankly in the eyes, recognizing their strength and weakness, and interpreting them in the clear light of understanding friendship. It is in this group that I should place George Eliot. In fact, she often refers to her characters as friends, for example:[1]

> It was very much in this way that our friend Adam Bede thought about Hetty; only he put his thoughts into different words.

To my mind it is this friendly sympathy which forms the strength and distinction of George Eliot's character insight. Her attitude of mind toward her characters is one of noble, womanly sympathy but with no abandonment of reason. It is this "intelligence of the heart" as Henry James calls it that gives her such a remarkable insight into the habits of the mixed beings of the English countryside and a passion for truth preserves her from false emotions and stock

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1. Eliot, George, Adam Bede. Loc. cit., p. 79

traditions. Sidney Lanier in speaking of her says:[1]

For with all her splendid reserve I find scarcely any writer so frankly desirous of sympathy on the part of her reader as George Eliot...her art though cool and analytic nevertheless sets before us fresh and blood people to fuse the whole analytic process with a synthetic fire of the poet's true sympathy...There is a large, poetic tolerance of these and her pa.... a reasonable combination of poetic tolerance and sympathy with the alertness of scientific accuracy.

In Adam Bede one finds Eliot's own opinion of the importance of the sympathetic attitude:[2]

Sympathy--the one poor word which includes all our best insight and all our best love... ll honor and reverence to the divine beauty of love! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women and children --in our gardens and in our homes. But let us love that other beauty too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy...ssa! Thank God; human feeling is like the sixty rivers that bless the earth; it does not wait for beauty--it flows with resistless force and brings beauty with it...and I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we put up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a heedless, scornful eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields--on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your encouragement, brave justice.

An examination of the four novels under consideration

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1. Sidney Lanier, The English Novel; A Study in the Development of Personality, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907, pp. 206,207.

2. Eliot, George, Adam Bede, N.Y. Burt Publishing Company, pp. 180-182.

reveals that George Eliot did carry this theory of sympathy over into the treatment of her characters. To illustrate this point, I will quote a number of times from her books, using quotations that will show her sympathetic regard for her characters. Pity seems to be the predominant emotional appeal that her characters make to her. The wanderings of Hetty Sorrel in her search for her betrayer Arthur Donnithorne seems to appeal particularly to her creator's pity:[1]

> Poor wandering Hetty, with the rounded childish face, and the hard, unloving, despairing soul looking out of it--with the narrow heart and narrow thoughts, no room in them for any sorrows but her own, and tasting that sorrow with the more intense bitterness! My heart bleeds for her as I see her toiling along on her weary feet, or seated in a cart, with her eyes fixed vacantly on the road before her, never thinking or caring whither it tends, till hunger comes and makes her desire that a village may be near...What will be the end?--the end of her objectless wandering, apart from all love, caring for human beings only through her pride, clinging to life only as the hunted brute clings to it? God preserve you and me from being the beginners of such misery!

Her patience and tolerance with Tito Melema, even when he is well started on his downward road to iniquity, is demonstrated by this passage:[2]

> Tito walked along with a light step, for the immediate

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1. Eliot, George, Adam Bede, A.L. Burt Publishing Company, p, 394.

2. Eliot, George, Romola, Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, p. 109.

fear had vanished; the usual joyousness of his disposition reassumed its predominance, and he was going to see Romola. Yet Romola's life seemed an image of that loving, pitying devotedness, that patient endurance of irksome tasks from which he had shrunk and excused himself. But he was not out of love with goodness, or prepared to plunge into vice: he was in his fresh youth, with soft pulses for all charm and loveliness; he had still a healthy appetite for ordinary human joys, and the poison could only work by degrees. He had sold himself to evil, but at present life seemed so nearly the same to him that he was not conscious of the bond. He meant all things to go on as they had done before, both within and without him: he meant to win golden opinions by meritorious exertion, by ingenious learning, by amiable compliance: he was not going to do anything that would throw him out of harmony with the beings he cared for. And he cared supremely for Romola; he wished to have her for his beautiful and loving wife. There might be a wealthier alliance within the ultimate reach of successful accomplishment like his, but there was no woman in all Florence like Romola. When she was near him, and looked at him with her sincere hazel eyes, he was subdued by the delicious influence as strong and inevitable as those musical vibrations which take possession of us with a rhythmic empire that no sooner ceases than we desire it to begin again.

In Middlemarch, her general impartiality toward her characters is shown in this exposition on Mr. Casaubon, who since he was the petty and misguided scholar who nearly wrecked Dorothea's life, might well have aroused animosity:[1]

For my part I feel very sorry for him. It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy: to be present at this great spectacle of life and never be liberated from a small hungry shivering self--never

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1. Eliot, George, Middlemarch, Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, 1899, pp. 252-253.

to be fully possessed by the glories we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholerly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dim-sighted...To know intense joy without a strong bodily frame, one must have an enthusiastic soul. Mr. Casaubon had never had a strong bodily frame, and his soul was sensitive without being enthusiastic: it was too languid to thrill out of self-consciousness into passionate delight; it went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying.

The pity and the sympathy that George Eliot shows in these excerpts is not a sentimental mawkishness that leads to emotional excesses but rather it is the higher brand of sympathy and pity that leads to penetrative understanding. One has the feeling that George Eliot learned:[1]

This art of vision and comphrension by a good deal of hard experience often with bruises and gashes incurred in taking things at the wrong end and fancying that our space is larger than it is.

Entering into a discussion of favorite characters it would be obviously false to say that George Eliot is totally impartial in her attitude toward her characters. By favorite characters I mean characters with whom the author feels exceptional sympathy and sees in fullness of detail and into whose mouths she may put her own sentiments. These characters in George Eliot, I feel, are nearly always women.

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1. Adam Bede. Loc. cit., p. 164.

As one wanders through the portrait gallery of George Eliot's women characters and lingers in contemplation before their familiar faces, none more truly reflects George Eliot's own passionate sensibility than does the face of dark-eyed Maggie Tulliver, rising hauntingly out of the Red Deeps. But if Maggie Tulliver is a favorite character, it is also true that George Eliot allowed fate to be very unkind to her. Dorothea Brooke, with her essential womanliness, has been called another favorite. It is reasonable to believe that the reason Maggie, Dorothea, Romola, and Dinah seem to be favorites is, that since each of them embodied some phase of their creator's nature as I have explained before, it is only natural that they should receive the major portion of sympathy and loving detail.

These favorite characters are all given emphasis but in the wider canons of art George Eliot may be said to be impartial. She dwelt on a character with particular emphasis,not only because that character is a special favorite, but because that character is the most important factor in the achievement of the aim of her book. In the lesser partialities of prejudice George Eliot has nothing to do. She is preeminently free of class prejudice. Squire and peasant, manufacturer and artisan, land agent and auctioneer, clergy and laity, gentle and simple all are

handled with sympathy and prepossession. She had the will and the desire to give them, each and all, their due. If she is unable to present them fairly it is a human weakness and not a lack of conscientious effort to be fair and honest. This type of impartiality so abundant in her books is no small recommendation in a novelist. It appeals to the reader's sense of fair play and goes far toward creating that impression of reality which the intrusion of prejudice speedily destroys, for prejudice leads to caricature and interferes with understanding.

[illegible] OF GEORGE ELIOT

In making a study of the technical methods of characterization as employed by George Eliot, I shall first consider her direct characterization, that is characterization in which traits of character are conveyed directly to the reader through some sort of statement by the author herself or through the report of another character.

One of the direct methods observed in George Eliot is the method of exposition. By exposition I mean a deliberate statement on the part of the author as a means of giving the traits of a character. Exposition is the logical and most frequently used means of introduction, yet George Eliot makes comparatively little use of this device as a means of character introduction. Only one character is introduced to us through exposition and that is Dorothea Brooke, the protagonist of Middlemarch. Selections from the first few pages of the novel will serve as an example of her method of introduction to a character through exposition:[1]

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare

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1. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., pp. 3-6

of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters...she was usually spoken of as being remarkedly clever; but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense...The pride of being ladies had something to do with Dorothea's plain dress; the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably "good": if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or pork-selling forefathers--any higher lower than an admiral or a clergyman...Dorothea knew many passages of Pascal's "Pensees" and of Jeremy Taylor by heart...Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractations, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection. With all this she, the elder of the sisters, was not twenty...She was regarded as an heiress; for not only had the sisters seven hundred a year each from their parents, but if Dorothea married and had a son, that son would inherit Mr. Brooke's estate, presumably worth about three thousand a year--a rental which seemed wealth to provincial families...

And now should Dorothea not marry?--a girl so handsome and with such prospects? Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistance on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might leave her at last to refuse all offers. A young lady of some birth and fortune, who knelt suddenly down on the floor by the side of a sick laborer and prayed fervidly as if the two thought herself living in the time of the apostles--who had strange whims of fasting like a papist, and of sitting up at night to read old theological books! Such a wife might awaken on some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy and the keeping of saddle-horses: a man would naturally think twice before he would risk himself in such fellowship...The rural opinion about the new young ladies, even among the cottagers, was generally in favor of Celia as being so amiable and innocent-looking, while Miss Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking.

It is interesting to notice the points George Eliot considers salient in the exposition of a person. In this quotation one notices that she has elaborated the following facts: age, appearance, and indifference to dress; social and financial position and prospects; Dorothea's type of mind, the books she preferred, her ideas on marriage, religion and duty. The stress in this exposition is on Miss Brooke's mental or spiritual qualities. The prelude to Middlemarch is largely an exposition of Dorothea's type of character. Likewise the first book of Middlemarch is entitled "Miss Brooke", a fact which demonstrates that its primary purpose is to introduce the reader to the character of Dorothea.

It is important to note that George Eliot thinks it is necessary to repeat this exposition of Dorothea's character at various times through the book in slightly different words. For example:[1]

> The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent; and with such a nature struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a walled-in maze of small

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1. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., p.22.

paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency. The thing which seemed to her best she wished to justify by the completest knowledge; and not to live in a pretended admission of rules which were never acted upon. Into this soul-hunger as yet all her young passion was poured; the union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path.

The character of Adam Bede is introduced by a lengthy physical description and what exposition George Eliot wishes to make of his character is interspersed with his actions and speech, never concentrated in pure expositary form. The same is true of the exposition used in portraying the character of Tito Melema in Romola and of Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss. Thus only in Middlemarch has George Eliot used large blocks of exposition as a means of introducing a character.

Some of the most illuminating bits of character-delineation in George Eliot are the short, incisive sentences introduced in the midst of the narrative. These few sentences about Tito Melema in Romola give one as much real insight into the nature of this charming and conscienceless man as does much of her more subtle psychological analysis:[1]

Tito had an innate love of reticience--let us say a

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., p.87.

talent for it--which acted as other impulses do, without any conscious motive, and like all people to whom concealment is easy, he would now and then conceal something which had as little the nature of a secret as the fact that he had seen a flight of crown.

This one from Adam Bede is surprisingly clear-cut and effective in differentiating the characters of the two brothers:[1]

The idle tramps always felt sure they could get a copper from Seth; they scarcely ever spoke to Adam.

Another example of effective exposition in a few words is seen in the passage from The Mill on the Floss in which a true dufference in character is shown by simply giving Maggie's and Tom's mode of reviewing past actions:[2]

Maggie saw a cloud on Tom's brow when he came home, which checked her joy at his coming so much sooner than she had expected, and she dared hardly speak to him as he stood silently throwing the small gravel-stones into the mill-dam. It is not pleasant to give up a rat-catching when you have set your mind on it. But if Tom had told his strongest feeling at that moment, he would have said, "I'd do just the same again." That was his usual mode of viewing his past actions whereas Maggie was always wishing she had done something different.

Another direct method of characterization in George Eliot is description. Her descriptions are not mere

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1. Adam Bede. Loc. cit., p.57

2. The Mill on the Floss. Loc. cit., p.80

enumerations of aspects of appearances; for even her short descriptions of unimportant characters communicate a feeling about the things observed and suggest to the reader the peculiar impression which the things observed has produced on the reader. The length of her physical description seems to vary with the importance of the character. One notices that in most cases this physical description comes with the first introduction of the character. The author is fond of describing her characters in their most characteristic attitude or occupation, for example, Adam and Seth Bede in their carpenter shop, Hetty Sorrel making butter in the dairy at Hall Farm, Dinah Morris preaching on the Hayslope Green, Will Ladislaw making a landscape sketch, Romola assisting her father in the library.

An interesting example of George Eliot's use of salient feature in description is shown in this introduction to Romola:[1]

> The only spot of bright color in the room was made by the hair of a tall maiden of seventeen or eighteen...The hair was a reddish gold color, enriched by an unbroken small ripple such as may be seen in the sunset clouds on autumnal evenings. It was confined by a black fillet above her small

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., p. 44

ears, from which it rippled forward again, and made a natural veil for her neck above the square-cut gown of black rascia. Her eyes were bent on a volume placed before her...

Here the author starts her description with the detail of Romola that has the greatest sensory appeal, the brightness of her golden hair in the gloominess of the old library. This description is limited by the position in which Romola is standing. One cannot see her eyes because they are bent over a book. Presently the girl walks to the other end of the room and we have the description of her carriage:[1]

Romola walked to the furthest end of the room with the queenly step which was the simple action of her tall, finely-wrought frame without the slightest conscious adjustment of herself.

The next step toward complete sensory impression of Romola comes in the sound of her voice:[2]

As Romola said this, a fine ear could have detected in her clear voice and distinct utterance, a faint suggestion of weariness struggling with habitual patience.

Thus, George Eliot has given Romola's features the added interest of progressive discovery. The same is true of her description of Tito Melema; for it is by gradual

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1. Romola. Loc. Cit., p.45
2. Romola. Loc. Cit., p.45

portrayal, presenting at one time only such traits or features as the reader needs to be reminded of to appreciate the scene before him. His talk with old Bratti brings out the charm of his liquid tones and his experience with Nello, the barber, the beauty of his dark curls; but it is not until he meets Romola that we know the effect of Tito's glance and the fascination of his air:[1]

> The finished fascination of his air came chiefly from the absence of demand and assumption. It was that of a fleet, soft-coated, dark-eyed animal that delights you by not bounding away in indifference from you, and unexpectedly pillows its chin on your palm and looks up at you desiring to be stroked--as if it loved you.

In her slight descriptions of minor persons George Eliot is likely to elaborate one concrete detail that is distinctive:[2]

> Mrs. Waule's voice was not at all defiant but low, muffled, neutral, as of a voice heard through cotton wool.

This surprising and significant detail is always attached to Mrs. Waule in the narrative that follows: she always speaks with a "wooly" tone.

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., p.
2. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., p.92

The only time in the novels that dress seems to have a characterizing effect is in Middlemarch in which case the clothes of Dorothea Brooke are held in contrast with those of Rosamond Vincey:[1]

> Let those who know, tell us exactly what stuff it was that Dorothea wore in those days of autumn--that thick white woolen stuff, soft to the touch and soft to the eye. It always seemed to have been lately washed and to smell of sweet hedges...yet if she had entered before a still audience as Imogene or Cato's daughter the dress might have seemed right enough; the grace and the dignity were in her limbs and neck; and about her simply parted hair and candid eyes...They were both tall and their eyes were on the level; but imagine Rosamond's infantile blondness and wondrous crown of hair-plaits, with her pale-blue dress of a fit and fashion so perfect that no dressmaker could look at it without emotion, a large embroidered collar which it was to be hoped that all beholders would know the price of, her small hands duly set off with rings, and that controlled self-consciousness of manner which is the expensive substitute for simplicity.

As for the word selection of George Eliot, it is sufficient to say that she is very fond of hyphenated words as a form of descriptive diction; such words as apple-checked, snow-white, deep-sunken, half-ardent. There is a noticeable lack of elaborate figures of speech, a simple simile now and then being her one departure from honest straightforward English.

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1. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., pp. 388,389

Another thing that may be observed among the direct methods of George Eliot is psychological analysis. It is her favorite technical device. Her method consists of partly narrative and partly expository statements of what is taking place in the mind of the character. She holds a mirror to the stream of consciousness of her characters. This immediate presentation of a character's mental processes and emotional reactions is useful as a means of preparing for an important scene, for an understanding of it while it is taking place, and as a means of interpreting its effects after it is over. Considering that there are two kinds of action, internal and external, mental analysis is serviceable as a means of making clear the elements of character that contribute to outward action. Examples of such analysis are abundant in George Eliot. This one from The Mill on the Floss is one in which the analysis in comparatively simple:[1]

> Maggie soon thought that she had been hours in the attic, and it must be tea-time, and they were all having their tea, and not thinking of her. Well, then, she would stay there and starve herself--hide herself behind the tub, and stay there all night; and then they would all be frightened, and Tom would be sorry. Thus Maggie thought in the pride

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1. The Mill on the Floss. Loc. cit., p.37

of heart, as she crept behind the tub; but presently she began to cry again at the idea that they didn't mind her being there. If she went down again to Tom now, would he forgive her? Perhaps, her father would be there and he would take her part. But, then she wanted Tom to forgive her because he loved her, and not because his father told him. No, she would never go down if Tom didn't come to fetch her. This resolution lasted in great intensity for five dark minutes behind the tub; but then the need of being loved, the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature, began to wrestle with her pride and soon threw it. She crept from behind her tub into the twilight of the long attic, but just then she heard a quick footstep on the stairs...It was Tom's step then that Maggie heard on the stairs.

A quotation from Romola in which Tito's mental reaction is particularly revealing is the one in which Baldassarre his foster-father appears at the supper in the Rucellai Gardens:[1]

Baldassarre began to speak as if he were thoroughly assured what he had to say; but in spite of his long preparation for this moment, there was the tremor of overmastering excitement in his voice. His passion shook him. He went on but he did not say what he had meant to say. As he fixed his eyes on Tito again the passionate words were like blows--they defied premeditation.

"There is a man among you who is a scoundrel, a liar, a robber. I was a father to him. I took him from beggary when he was a child. I reared him, I cherished him, I taught him, I made him a scholar. My head has lain hard that his might have a pillow. And he left me in slavery; he sold the gems that were mine, and when I came again, he denied me."

The last words had been uttered with almost convulsed agitation and Baldassarre paused, trembling. All glances were turned on Tito, who was now looking straight at Baldassarre. It was a moment of desperation that annihilated all feeling in him, except the determination to risk anything for a chance of escape. And he gathered confidence

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., p.320

from the agitation by which Baldassarre was evidently shaken. He had ceased to pinch the neck of the lute, and had thrust his thumbs into his belt, while his lips had begun to assume a slight curl. He had never done an act of murderous cruelty even to the smallest animal that could utter a cry, but at that moment he would have been capable of treading the breath from a smiling child for the sake of his own safety.

Reports of other characters as a means of direct character portrayal is a fourth method which Eliot uses to some extent. Her most frequent use of this method, however, is as a means of introducing new characters. In Adam Bede, the following characters are introduced in this way: Dinah Morris, the Reverend Adolphus Irwine, Mr. and Mrs. Poyser, and Squire Donithorne. In the Mill on the Floss, Tom Tulliver, Maggie Tulliver, Lawyer Wakem, Philip Wakem, Mr. Riley, Mr. Stelling, Misters Glegg, Pullett, and Deane, Lucy Deane and Mr. and Mrs. Moss are so introduced. In Romola, Romola, Bardo de Bardi and Savonarola are first presented by other characters; and in Middlemarch, Rosamond Vincey, Doctor Lydate, Will Ladislaw, Mary Garth, Peter Featherstone, Mr. and Mrs. Caleb Garth and Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Bulstrode.

Besides using characters to introduce characters, Eliot also has other characters aid her in further direct characterisation as will be illustrated by the following examples. Seth Bede in Adam Bede makes this remark about

his brother:[1]

"Nay, nay, my Addy, thee mean'st me no unkindness. I know that well enough. Thee't like thy dog Gyp--thee bark'st at me sometimes, but thee allays lick'st my hand after."

In Middlemarch the sharp-tongued Mrs. Cadwallader in speaking of Mr. Casaubon's deficiency as a red-blooded man says:[2]

"Somebody put a drop of his blood under a magnifying-glass and it was all semicolons and parentheses."

Tito Melema characterizes pretty little Tessa with these few words:[3]

"You pretty pigeon! Do you think anybody could help taking care of you, if you looked at them?"

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1. Adam Bede. Loc. cit., p.6.
2. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., p.61.
3. Romola. Loc. cit., p.137.

INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION OF GEORGE ELIOT

Next in consideration is the indirect characterization of George Eliot; that is to say, characterization in which she brings the reader face to face with the person whom she wishes to portray and leaves the reader to make his own acquaintance with this character through his own inference from the thoughts, speech, and action of the character.

One of the most delicate means of indirect characterization is the reproduction of the character's thoughts at decisive or characteristic moments. It is interesting to note that these four novels show a steady progress toward sophistication and complexity of character mind. Thus the thoughts of Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede are simple, naive, and easily divined. No part of the book is more indicative of the smallness of the soul and mind that lay behind her beautiful face than is George Eliot's reproduction of the little creature's thoughts in the chapter called "The Two Bed-Chambers", a chapter in which Hetty exults in her beauty and in the first definite hopes of Arthur Donnithorne's love:[1]

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1. Adam Bede. Loc. cit., pp. 153,154.

She decided to let down her hair and make herself look like that picture of a lady in Miss Lydia Donnithorne's dressing room. It was so fine... Oh! yes, she was very pretty; Captain Donnithorne thought so. Prettier than anybody about Hayslope--prettier than any of the ladies she had ever seen visiting at the Chase.... and prettier than Miss Bacon, the miller's daughter, who was called the beauty of Treddleton. And Hetty looked at herself tonight with quite a different sensation from what she had ever felt before; there was an invisible spectator whose eye rested on her like morning on the flowers. His soft voice was saying over and over again those pretty things she had heard in the wood; his arm was around her, and the delicate roso-scent of his hair was with her still.... She looked down at her arms, no arms could be prettier than hers down to a little way below the elbow; they were white and plump, and dimpled to match her cheeks; but toward the wrist she thought with vexation they were coarsened by butter-making and other work that ladies never did. Captain Donnithorne wouldn't like her to go on doing work; he would like to see her in nice clothes, and thin shoes and white stockings; for he must love her very much--no one else had ever put his arm around her and kissed her in that way. He would want to marry her and make a lady of her--she could hardly dare to shape the thought--yet, how else could it be.... And nothing could be as it had been again; perhaps some day she would be a grand lady and ride in her coach, and dress for dinner in a brocaded silk, with feathers in her hair and her dress sweeping the ground like Miss Lydia and Lady Dacey.

This transcript from the thoughts of Tito Melema in Romola shows his usual method of rationalizing to soothe his conscience;[1]

But, after all, the sale of the ring was a slight matter. Was it also a slight matter that little Tessa was under a delusion which would doubtless fill her small head with expectations doomed to disappointment? Should he try to see the little thing alone again and undeceive her at once, or should he leave the disclosure to time and chance?

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., pp. 169, 170.

Happy dreams are pleasant, and they easily come to an end with daylight and the stir of life. The sweet, pouting, innocent, round thing! It was impossible not to think of her. Tito thought he should like to some time take her a present that would please her, and just learn if her step-father treated her more cruelly now that her mother was dead. Or, should he at once undeceive Tessa, and then tell Romola about her so that they might together find a happier lot for the poor thing? No; that unfortunate little incident of the cerretano and the marriage, and his allowing Tessa to part from his delusion, must never be known to Romola, and since no enlightenment could dispel it from Tessa's mind, there would always be the risk of betrayal; besides, even little Tessa might have some pall in her when she found herself disappointed in her love--yes, she must be a little in love with him.....

Some of the finest description of a curious blending of motives and ingenious self-deception is shown in the selection from Middlemarch in which the hypocrite Bulstrode refrains from officiously saving the life of Raffles, who threatens to expose his past history. The doctor has left the patient in the hands of Bulstrode instructing him as to the exact amount of brandy and opium that the patient should receive:[1]

Bulstrode went away from the sick room without anxiety as to what Raffles might say in his raving, which had taken on a mutter-incoherence not likely to create any dangerous belief. At any rate he must risk that. He went down into the wainscoted parlor first and began to consider whether he should have his horse saddled and go home by the moonlight, and give up caring for earthly consequences. Then, he wished that he begged Doctor Lydgate to come again that evening. Perhaps he might deliver a different opinion, and

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1. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., pp. 592,593,594.

think that Raffles was getting into a less hopeful state. Should he send for Lydgate? If Raffles were really getting worse, and slowly dying, Bulstrode felt that he could go to bed and sleep in gratitude with Providence. But was he worse? Lydgate might come and simply say that he was going on as he expected, and predict that he would by and by fall into a good sleep and get well. What was the use of sending for him? Bulstrode shrank from the result. No ideas or opinions could hinder from seeing the one possibility to be, that Raffles recovered would be the man as before, with his strength as a tormenter renewed, obliging him to drag away his wife to spend her years apart from her friends and native place, carrying an alienating suspicion against him in her heart.

He had sat an hour and a half in this conflict by the firelight only, when a sudden thought made him rise and light the bed candle, which he had brought down with him. The thought was, that he had forgotten to tell Mrs. Abel when the doses of opium must cease. He took hold of the candle-stick, but stood motionless for a long while. She might have already given him more than Lydgate had prescribed. But it was excusable in him, that he should forget part of the order, in his present wearied condition. He walked upstairs not knowing whether he should go immediately to his own room or whether he should turn to the patient's room and rectify his omission. He paused in the passage, with his face turned upwards toward Raffles' room, and he could hear him moaning and murmuring. He was not asleep, then. Who could know that Lydgate's prescription would not be better disobeyed than followed, since there was still no sleep?

There are a number of instances in George Eliot in which the mere speech of a fictitious individual is self-expressive enough to convey a vivid sense of character.

No scene exemplifies this means of characterization more clearly than does the scene in The Mill on the Floss in which Stephen Guest urges Maggie to run away with him and she refuses because of the treason it would mean to Lucy Deane, to

whom Stephen is betro[illegible], [illegible] to Philip [illegible]en, to whom Maggie herself is pledged:[1]

"Maggie! Dearest!" exclaimed Stephon. "If you love me you are mine. Who can have so great a claim on you as I have? My life is bound up in my love. There is nothing in the past that can annul our right to each other! It is the first time we have either of us loved with our whole heart and soul."

Maggie was still silent for a little while--looking down.....

"No--not with my whole heart and soul, Stephen," she said, with timid resolution. "I have never consented to it with my whole mind. There are memories, and affections, and longings after perfect goodness, that have such a strong hold on me; they would never quit me for long; they would come back and be pain to me--repentance. I couldn't live in peace if I put the shadow of a wilful sin between myself and God. I have caused enough sorrow already--I know--I feel it; but I have never deliberately consented to it; I have never said, 'They shall suffer, that I may have joy.'"..

Stephen loosed her hand, and rising impatiently, walked up and down the room in suppressed rage.

"Good God!" he burst out at last. "What a miserable thing a woman's love is to a man's! I could commit crimes for you--and you can balance and choose in that way. But you don't love me; if you had a tithe of the feeling for me that I have for you, it would be impossible to you to think for a moment of sacrificing me. But it weighs nothing with you that you are robbing me of my life's happiness."

Maggie pressed her fingers together almost convulsively as she hold them clasped in her lap. A great terror was upon her, as if she were ever and anon seeing where she stood by great flashes of lightning, and then again stretch forth her hands in the darkness.

"No--I don't sacrifice you--I couldn't sacrifice you," she said, as soon as she could speak again. "But I can't believe in a good for you, that I feel--that we both feel is a wrong towards others. We can't choose happiness either for ourselves or for another. We can't tell where that will lie. We can only choose whether we will renounce that, for the sake of obeying the divine voice within us--for the sake

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1. The Mill on the Floss. Loc. cit., pp. 510, 511, 512.

of being true to all the motives that sanctify our lives. I know this belief is hard; it has slipped away from me again and again; but I have felt that if I let go of it forever, I should have no light through the darkness of this life.....

Stephen, who has the sane logic of a man, and knows nothing of the intricacies of a woman's conscience or of their imaginative sense of morality, believes that Maggie should marry him. But Maggie, seeing the sorrow that her union with Stephen would bring to Philip and Lucy, wrenches herself away from her lover and return home to face certain disgrace.

The following speech of Romola's serves as a mirror to her own character and of her denunciation of Tito:[1]

"You talk of substantial good, Tito! Are faithfulness, and love, and sweet memories, no good? Is it no good that we should keep our silent promises on which others build because they believe in our love and truth?.... Or, is it good to harden our hearts against all the wants and hopes of those who depended upon us? To talk cleverly, perhaps, and find soft couches for themselves, and live and die with their base souls as their best companions."

No speech in the book is more characteristic or interesting than that of the worthy Mrs. Poyser, the presiding genius of Hall Farm in Adam Bede. Her delightful shrewdness makes her speech, already rich with local dialect, eloquent. Some of her most humorous speeches follow:[1]

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., p. 261.
2. Adam Bede. Loc. cit.,pp. 208, 531, 530.

"You're mighty fond o' Craig, but for me, I think he's welly like a crow as thinks the sun's rose o' purpose to hear him crow."

"Some folks' tongues are like the clocks as run on strikin'; not to tell you the time o' day but because there's summat wrong i' their own inside."

"The men are mostly so slow; their thoughts overrun 'em and they can only catch 'em by the tail. I can count a stocking-top while a man's getting his tongue ready; and when he outs wi' his speech at last, there's little broth to be made on't. It's your dead chickens takes the longest hatching. However, I am not denyin' that women are foolish; God Almighty made 'em to match the men."

One notices the peculiarities of the peasant dialect; the use of "sinnifies" for signifies, "megrims" for imaginings, "neffy" for nephew, "enoc" for enough. In Middlemarch eccentricities of speech are noticeable in the speech of Mr. Trumbull, the pretentious auctioneer, who always follows a simple phrase with a high-sounding one in order to display his knowledge:[1]

"Oh, yes, anybody may ask," said Mr. Trumbull, with loud and gentle, humorous, although cutting, sarcasm. "Anybody may interrogate. Anyone may give their remarks an interrogative turn.... This is constantly done by good speakers, even though they do not anticipate an answer. It is what we call a figure of speech, speech at a high figure, as one might say." The eloquent auctioneer smiled at his own ingenuity.

The naivete of Celia Brooke in Middlemarch is shown

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1. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., p. 281.

in this quotation:[1]

"Oh, Mrs. Cadwallader, I don't think it can be nice to marry a man with a great soul." She seemed to blush as she breathed.

In fiction, as in life, action speaks louder than words, and one of the most convincing ways of delineating characters is by exhibiting a person in the performance of some characteristic or decisive action.

Gesture is a device that George Eliot uses sparingly. One remembers Rosamond Vincey's habit of turning her lovely neck and patting her blond plaits of hair; Tito Melema's way of running his hand through dark curls before he speaks; Adam Bede's manner of whistling low now and then, turning his head on one side with a smile of gratification as he worked in his shop; the child Maggie's defiant way of throwing back her rebellious black hair and stamping her small foot; but beyond these one notices no use of habitual gesture. A selection from Middlemarch will illustrate the way George Eliot makes decisive actions which reveal character. Young Mary Garth is sitting near the bed of the old miser, Peter Featherstone, who is slowly dying. Great numbers of the old man's relations are asleep in the house, anxiously awaiting his death and the division of his money:[2]

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1. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., p. 47.
2. Ibid., p.257.

Tonight he had not once snapped, and for the first hour or two he lay remarkably still, until at last Mary heard him rattling his bunch of keys against the tin box which he always kept in his bed beside him. About three o'clock he said with remarkable distinctness, "Missy, come here!"

Mary obeyed, and found that he had already drawn the tin box from under the clothes, though he usually asked to have this done for him; and he had selected the key. He now unlocked the box, and drawing from it another key, looked straight at her with eyes that seemed to have recovered all their sharpness and said, "How many of 'em are in the house?"

"You mean of your own relations, sir," asked Mary, well used to the old man's way of speech. He nodded slightly and she went on.

"Mr. Jonah Featherstone and young Cranch are sleeping here."

"Oh, ay they stick, do they? and the rest--they come every day I'll warrant--Solomon and Jane, and all the young uns? They come peeping, and counting and casting up?..... The more fools they. You hearken, Missy. It's three o'clock in the morning, and I've got all my faculties as well as ever I had in my life. I know all my property, and where the money's put out, and everything. And I've made everything ready to change my mind, and do as I like at the last. Do you hear, Missy? I've got my faculties."

"Well, sir?" said Mary quietly.

He now lowered his tone with an air of great cunning. "I have made two wills, and I am going to burn one. Now you do as I tell you. This is the key of my iron chest, in the closet there. You push well at the side of the brass plate at the top, till it goes like a bolt; then you can put the key in the front lock and turn it. See and do that; and take out the topmost paper--Last Will and Testament--big printed."

"No, sir," said Mary, in a firm voice, "I cannot do that."

"Not do it? I tell you, you must," said the old man, his voice beginning to shake under the shock of this resistance.

"I cannot touch your iron chest or your will. I must refuse to do anything that might lay me open to suspicion."

"I tell you, I'm in my right mind. Sha'nt I do as I like at the last? I made two wills on purpose. Take the key, I say."

"No, sir, I will not," said Mary, more resolutely still. Her repulsion was getting stronger.

"I tell you, there's no time to lose."

Other uses of decisive action that portrays character are Tito's jump into the Arno, Romola's return to her duty in Florence, Dorothea's determination to marry Will Ladislaw in spite of Casaubon's request, the fight between Adam Bede and Arthur Donnithorne in the wood, Dinah's long vigil in the prison with Hetty.

GEORGE ELIOT'S TREATMENT OF CHANGING CHARACTER

George Eliot believed that character was not cut in marble, something solid and unalterable, but something living and changing that may become diseased even as our bodies may. As a result of this belief, one finds that these four novels present an interesting study of developing and deteriorating character. Five of the principal characters show important changes as a result of circumstance, influence, or innate nature. Adam Bede, Maggie Tulliver, and Dorothea Brooke represent developing character; they emerge from moral struggle and from the pressure of circumstance victorious, with enriched character and broadened sympathies. Tito Melema deteriorates from a charming and talented youth to a faithless traitor without any real effort to lift himself above the stream of circumstance; Doctor Lydgate struggles, but gradually abandons his lofty aims, in consequence of his slavery to his pretty wife. We have in this

latter case a slow reluctant surrender, step by step, of the higher to the lower nature.

In presenting George Eliot's treatment of the changing character I shall illustrate by two characters taken from these novels: the deterioration of Tito Melema in Romola, and the development of Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch. I shall summarize their life histories briefly, pointing out crucial incidents that have an influence or produce a change in their characters.

First let us consider Tito Melema who enters the scene with all the promise of a coming hero and passes from us a full-blown villain. He appears in Florence, and his charming manner, keen intellect, and richly tinted beauty makes him a favorite at once among the Florentines. Among the events of the first week were an opportunity to teach Greek to the sons of a rich family, an invitation to become secretary in the Scala palace, and a request to serve as librarian for a blind scholar, Bardo de Bardi. In order not to spoil his chances he does not tell his new-found friends that his foster-father Baldassarre, to whom he owes his splendid education and the precious jewels he has with him, is missing. He has not learned of his father since the shipwreck but does not bother himself about him; for he feels that his exacting old father would be a handicap to him in his fortune

seeking. He persuades himself that his father is dead and sells a number of the jewels and invests the money. His good fortune continues, and he wins the love of Romola, Brado's beautiful daughter. One day he gets a communication from his father through a monk who turns out to be Romola's brother, Fra Luca. The message from Baldassarre says that he is sold for a slave and that the jewels will ransom him. Tito is displeased at the interference in his progress and is further displeased, for he fears that the monk will tell Romola the whole story of his desertion of his benefactor. But the monk takes suddenly ill and dies carrying Tito's secret with him. With the announcement that Fra Luca is dead Tito continues with his own pleasant life gradually endearing himself to the most influential men in Florence. He continues his relations with Tessa, an ignorant little peasant girl whose pretty face and trusting mind intrigue him. He deceives her into thinking that they are married and provides a place for her stay, where he visits her from time to time. He marries Romola and all goes smoothly until one day, making his way through the crowd he finds himself face to face with his father:[1]

> The two men looked at each other, silent as death:

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., p. 202.

Baldassarre, with dark fierceness and a tightening grip of the soiled, worn hands on the velvet-clad arm; Tito, with cheeks and lips all bloodless, fascinated by terror. It seemod a long while to them. It was but a moment.

The first sound Tito heard was the short laugh of Pierro di Cosimo, who stood close by him and was the only person that could see his face.

"Ha, ha! I know what a ghost should be now."

"This is another escaped prisoner," said Lorenzo Tornabeoni. "Who is he, I wonder?"

"Some madman, surely!" said Tito.

He hardly knew how the words had come to his lips; there are moments when our passions speak and decide for us, and we seem to stand by and wonder. They carry in them an inspiration of crime that in one instant does the work of long premeditation.

By this declaration, "Some madman surely!", Tito has denied the existence of his father and taken his first irrevocable step downward. Baldassarre, half crazed by his son's action, becomes the very incarnation of revenge. He haunts Tito's path, finally denouncing him at a supper at the Rucellai Gardens. But the clever Tito recovers from his shock and makes an artful speech in which he explains that Baldassarre is an insane old servant who holds a grudge against him. The author shows Tito's further moral descent as follows:[1]

Tito felt more and more confidence as he went on with his speech. The lies were not so difficult as he went on; and the words fell from his lips easily; they gave him a sense of power such as men feel when they have begun a

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., p. 321.

muscular feat successfully. In this way he acquired boldness enough to end each challenge with proofs.

Tito's lying tongue has twice saved him. The next instance of his downfall is his treason to Romola. He sells the library of Romola's father, thus betraying the old scholar's dying request and destroying Romola's faith and love in him. He uses the money from the library to finance a political expedition to Rome. Since Romola has broken with him, he finds it more necessary than ever to find comfort in the arms of little Tessa who is now the mother of two children. He next betrays his adopted country. He sells a political secret to the conspirators and causes the death of a number of innocent men. Feeling that public opinion is rising against him, he decides to leave Florence. But the rioters who have taken possession of the city are too quick for him and give chase to him. He escapes with his life only by jumping from the bridge into the Arno. He swims a long way and finally comes to the shore exhausted. But he finds that he is not alone for Baldassarre has followed him and is waiting on the shore for him:[1]

Dead--was he dead? The eyes were rigid. But no, it could not be--justice had brought him. Men looked dead

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1. Romola. Loc. cit., pp. 498, 499.

sometimes, and yet the life came back into them. Baldassarre did not feel feeble in that moment. He knew just what he could do. He got his large fingers within the neck of the tunic and held him there, kneeling on one knee beside the body and watching the face. There was fierce hope in his heart, but it was mixed with trembling... Rigid--rigid still. Those eyes with the half-fallen lids were locked against vengeance. Could it be that he was dead? There was nothing to measure the time; it seemed long enough for hope to freeze into despair..... Surely at last the eyelids were quivering..... There was a vibrating light in them; they opened wide.

"Ah, yes! You see me--you know me!"

Tito knew him; but he did not know whether it was life or death that had brought him into the presence of his injured father. It might be death--and death might mean this chill gloom with the face of the hideous past hanging over him forever.

Later, the two men are found, both dead, for Baldassarre had spent his last strength in choking his enemy, Tito. Thus George Eliot ends the life history of Tito, who so feared the unpleasant, who destroyed the faith of all who loved him, who pampered his self-love endlessly. The moral implication of Tito is one of the greatest in all of George Eliot.

Finally, I shall demonstrate Eliot's method of developing and enriching human character by a brief review of the spiritual life of Dorothea Brooke, the heroine of Middlemarch.

As the book opens, Dorothea is an intellectual young woman whose favorite occupation is drawing plans of model cottages for the poor, who disciplines herself by frequent

fasts, has scruples about even wearing the family jewels or riding horseback, and is not free from conscientious qualms on any subject. She is one of the possible Saint Theresas who through the meanness of opportunity never comes to the front. But she is adorably simple and ardent even if she is lacking in common sense. She falls quite naturally in love with the idea of being a helpmate in the scholastic endeavors of Edward Casaubon, a dull and passionless pedant whom she sees with glorifying eyes, and with great faith in his ability and in the importance of his work she marries him. Then the disillusionment begins. She learns through his young cousin, Will Ladislaw, that he is hopelessly out-dated in his research. Her first annoyance with Casaubon comes when she attempts to help him in his work and he tells her that he would feel more at liberty if he were alone. Upon her insistence he allows her to do petty tasks of copying and recording that are an insult to her intelligence.

She slowly discovers how unlovable Casaubon is, and with her faith in his work gone, she has only pity left in which to regard him. The secret knawing mistrust of his own powers causes Casaubon to hide himself more and more from his keen-eyed young wife. But the nobility of Dorothea's nature unfolding under this stress, resolutely submits. Her strength of will and her rebellion is slowly converted into

patience and tolerance. Her tenderness toward her husband does not cease even when she loses her respect for his work. George Eliot remarks with characteristic insight that the energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire such a resolve submission as Dorothea's. Casaubon becomes intensely jealous of the interest that Dorothea and Will Ladislaw have in each other and when he dies, provides in his will that Dorothea shall not inherit his property if she marries Ladislaw. Dorothea, her eyes painfully opened by her experience and sorrow, returns to Lowick Manor after her husband's death, and lives alone. She becomes a real source of philanthropic aid in the community. Her sympathy and essential womanliness makes it possible for Lydgate to say of her:[1]

"She certainly is handsome but I had not thought of it. When one sees a perfect woman one never feels her attributes; one is conscious of her presence."

George Eliot has this to say of the Dorothea that experience and suffering has developed:[1]

Her finely-touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive, for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on historical acts.

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1. Middlemarch. Loc. cit., p. 391.

Dorothea's final consent to marry Ladislaw shows the ultimate triumph of her broadened nature over her former inhibitions. She sees that such a u ion is necessary for the full development of her life and for achievement of the greatest good. And she is courageous enough to overlo k her jealous husband's selfish demand and faces the world in poverty with the man whom she loves.

CONCLUSIONS

The characters in these four novels come from two sources: first, Eliot's own experience and observation as a girl in arwickshire and Coventry, represented by the characters in Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, and Middle arch; and secondly, research and documentation, represented by the characters in Romola. In both cases George Eliot's creative imagination is a second factor in the formation of fictitious personages. The heroines in the four novels, Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, Romola, and Dorothea Brooke each represent different phases of their creator's own character, idealized. A number of close alliances may be traced between the persons in her actual life and those that people her books, especially Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch. Her attitude toward her characters is one

of friendly, interpretive sympathy. This large-hearted sympathy and tolerance marks, in my opinion, one of the keynotes to her art and distinction in character delineation. She chooses to write of commonplace people and her novels are remarkably free from class and social prejudice.

Of the two general methods of characterization, direct and indirect, George Eliot is most at ease with the first; but through a thorough study of narrative she has developed an accurate dramatic sense, which is the basis of characterization by the indirect method. Her favorite means of character delineation is by psychological analysis, a device that she develops to a remarkable extent. Her chief use of exposition as a method of direct characterization is in the form of explanatory statements interspersed with the narrative. With the exception of Dorothea in Middlemarch she does not use exposition to introduce any of her characters. She makes quite an exhaustive use of physical description that shows acute powers of observation and an unusual, complete, sensory appeal. Report of other characters is her predominant method of introducing new characters. She shows an unusual interest in changing character and has given five, well-rounded studies of changing character in three of her novels, three of which show a development and two of which

show a deterioration. [illegible] of the speech of her peasants has a rich local flavor. The themes of the four novels have a high moral implication and the crucial moments in the lives of the important characters are those that involve momentous moral decisions.

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